

Griggs Building  
(Franklin House, Rex Hotel)  
221-227 Bank Street  
Waterbury  
New Haven County  
Connecticut

HABS No. CT-410

HABS  
CONN,  
5-WATB,  
15-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
MID-ATLANTIC REGION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19106

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY

HABS  
CONN,  
5-WAT  
15-

GRIGGS BUILDING  
(Franklin House, Rex Hotel)

HABS No. CT-410

Location: 221-227 Bank Street, Waterbury, New Haven  
County, Connecticut.

USGS Waterbury Quadrangle, Universal  
Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 18.662250.  
4601730

Present Owner: Waterbury Renewal and Economic Development  
Agency  
Leavenworth Street  
Waterbury, Connecticut 06702

Present Occupant: Vacant

Significance: The Griggs Building, built for a prominent  
Waterbury citizen, Henry C. Griggs, is an  
elaborate and rare example of the Queen Anne  
style applied to commercial architecture. The  
National Register states that the Griggs  
Building, designed by Waterbury architect  
Robert W. Hill, "stands among the best  
examples of Queen Anne commercial  
architecture in the state". Acknowledgment  
must be given to Hill's skillful  
incorporation of this style, known for its  
asymmetry and eclectic forms, into the  
facade-oriented building.

But, perhaps more valuable than the  
individual significance of the Griggs  
Building, is its place within the Bank Street  
Historic District: a contiguous row of large  
multi-story buildings set close to the  
sidewalk, highly decorative and diverse in  
style, yet closely related in size, scale,  
and materials. Together the four buildings  
are typical of Waterbury's commercial  
architecture at the turn of the century.  
They also represent the city's prosperity and  
its economic growth during that period.

PART 1. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1884.
2. Architect: The Waterbury native, Robert W. Hill, 1828-1909, studied architecture under Henry Austin in New Haven, and returned in 1858 to set up his own practice. His office employed a number of soon-to-be-prominent younger architects, such as Theodore B. Peck and Joseph E. Griggs, son of Henry C. Griggs and architect of the neighboring Whittimore Building. Hill was Architect for the State under four governors, and consequently designed many state armories, public schools, a Litchfield County court house, and other public buildings in neighboring towns. In Waterbury he designed St. Margaret's School, the Hall Memorial Chapel, St. John's Parish House, and the old city hall which, among other buildings of his, burned down in the great 1902 fire. The Griggs Building is his largest and most elaborate remaining design.

3. Original and subsequent owners: The following is an incomplete chain of title to the land on which the structure stands. Reference is to the Clerk's Office of Waterbury, New Haven County, Connecticut.

1888 Estate Distribution, July 12, 1888, recorded in Volume 117, p. 517.

Henry C. Griggs to Charles J., David C., Robert F., and Wilfred E. Griggs.

1912 Deed, October 3, 1912, recorded in Volume 243, p. 493.

David C., Robert F., and Wilfred E. Griggs to Thomas Conlon.

1912 Deed, October 4, 1912, recorded in Volume 243, p. 538.

Thomas Conlon to Columbus Building Corporation.  
(Genevieve Conlon, President)

1943 Deed, April 12, 1943, recorded in Volume 528, p. 107.

Columbus Building Corporation to Rocco Diorio.

1950 Deed, April 12, 1950, recorded in Volume 633,

GRIGGS BUILDING  
(Franklin House, Rex Hotel)  
HABS-No. CT-419 (Page 3)

p. 278.

Rocco Diorio to Diorio Realty Corporation.

1957 Deed, October 7, 1957, recorded in Volume 759,  
p. 9.

Diorio Realty Corporation to Caesar Calderone.

1972 Deed, November 28, 1972, recorded in Volume  
1066, p. 286.

Caesar Calderone to City of Waterbury.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: The builder's name was Benham. He also moved Griggs' wooden house off of the site.
5. Original plans and construction: The existing structure, though deteriorated, appears to be essentially the same as built. Unfortunately, no original drawings, plans, or early photographs have been found. These may have shown the original designs for the east elevation's fire-escape/porch and the west elevation's storefront.
6. Alterations and additions: There have only been minor alterations and additions to the Griggs Building. When the Whittemore (215-219 Bank Street) was built in 1904, four stories of the Griggs' north elevation were used as a party wall, and all windows, except for the ones facing the new light well, were blocked in. Also, around this time, the west storefront facade received new wood-framed display windows and doors which still remain as part of the middle and right storefront bays. Although these partitions are also in the Victorian style, they cover-up details of the original cast-iron piers. A fire escape was added to the west elevation. The left storefront bay is the most recent modernization, probably done shortly before the building's sale to the city. The structural 'billboard', designed to catch falling bricks, was erected in 1978.

Interior alterations are mostly confined to the first floor, where numerous shopkeepers have renovated the spaces to fit their needs. The upper floors, though not deliberately altered, appear to have been vandalized and are not structurally sound.

B. Historical Context:

The Griggs Building was built in 1884 on land where the Griggs' family home once stood. Anticipating the business district's southern expansion, Henry C. Griggs relocated and sold his old residence in order to erect this income-producing commercial building. As evidenced by land records and newspaper advertisements, this was not his only real estate venture. (See III. F.2. of this outline.)

In addition to real estate, Griggs is perhaps better known for his involvement in Waterbury as both an important manufacturer and city representative. Griggs, born in 1834, at the age of 27 began managing the Waterbury Button Company, makers of small brass items. He was also president of the Dime Savings Bank, director of the Waterbury National Bank, Road Commissioner, Water Commissioner, Alderman, and a two-term member of the Connecticut General Assembly.

The Griggs Building was built to accommodate small businesses on the first floor, and a hotel/rooming house on the upper floors. The building remained in the Griggs family for twenty-eight years. Early first floor tenants included George Fiske, piano tuner; Tobachnick's Meat Market; and L.D. Benton's photographic studio. (See III.F.3. of this outline.) On the upper floors, Mrs. Lucy Weeden, manager of the \$2.00-a-day Franklin House, was Griggs' first major tenant, followed by The Arlington in 1905, and The Heini in 1909. Under new ownership in 1912, the hotel area was operated as The Norton in 1913, The Stag in 1915, and finally The Rex from 1952 to 1958, if not longer. At no time was this considered one of Waterbury's finer hotels.

In 1972, the City of Waterbury bought, condemned, and slated the Griggs Building for demolition. Concerned citizens, in an attempt to save Waterbury's central business district's historic architecture from demolition, formed the group WATCH: Waterbury Action to Conserve our Heritage, Inc. WATCH brought a suit against the City's Urban Renewal Agency and HUD in 1978, arguing that national review procedures must be followed before the demolition of any historic property. In 1979, under the National Preservation Act, the U.S. Second District Court of Appeals ruled that as long as federal agencies retain funding control, they must consider the effect of their projects on historic

properties. In other words, Waterbury's Urban Renewal Agency, still under contract with HUD, could only raze buildings declared by the National Advisory Council on Historic Places not eligible for the National Register. The court's ruling in favor of WATCH set a national precedent for towns owning historic properties.

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Griggs Building is one of few Queen Anne style commercial buildings in the region. Its elaborate facade is a good example of that style: variety of materials and surface textures, irregular forms, and eclectic ornamentation. This playfulness continues on the interior, though not as elaborately.
2. Condition of the fabric: The building's exterior is in poor condition. Sandblasting and water have caused much brick to spall and mortar to disintegrate. Painted facade areas are in better condition. Interior damage has resulted from long-term neglect, vandalism, and water. All painted surfaces are in advanced stages of crazing, stairwell portions are missing, and wood frames and sashes are rotting. There appear to be no major structural problems, however.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The five-story, two-bay building is almost rectangular in plan, and measures 42'-6" wide by 71'-0" (north wall) and 79'-0" (south wall) deep. This 8'-0" discrepancy is due to the angled east wall, measuring 43'-6" long. The building's west elevation is 56'-0" tall and slopes down to 52'-6" in the rear. (See Site Plan, page 15.)
2. Foundation: The foundation is of large rough-cut fieldstones and mortar measuring 2'-0" thick.
3. Walls: The five-story west facade is a highly decorative combination of red brick, brownstone, terra-cotta, cast-iron, wood, and grey slate. Much of this is painted white. The first story is designed for retail and display, the second through fourth stories make up the main facade, and the fifth story is treated as a steep hip roof.

GRIGGS BUILDING  
(Franklin House, Rex Hotel)  
HABS No. CT-410 (Page 6)

The storefront is divided by six painted cast-iron piers, ionic in derivation, with fluted necks, foliate decoration, and, cast in the far left pier, Henry C. Griggs' monogram. Over the right bay is a rosette decorated I-beam supported by two of the piers; the left bay's is missing. Display windows are flush with the piers while the four doors are setback. Above the storefront rests a 2'-0" thick brownstone lintel with an egg-and-dart molded cornice.

To quote from the National Register's Nomination Form: "Above the ground floor the facade is bilaterally symmetric with a group of three windows on either side of the central bay. On the second story the central bay has a large terra-cotta tablet bearing the inscription "Griggs Building". The third story central bay has a tablet with the date "A.D. 1884" mounted within a frame with a triangular pediment as its header. Below the third story window are terra-cotta panels with a festoon covering in the center and bead-and-reel molding around the perimeter....the panels below the fourth story windows are more richly carved, with foliate decoration in spiral form and owls in the center." Brownstone sills continue across the whole facade on the third and fourth stories. Above, at the fourth story window imposts, stringcourses of dentils also run the width of the facade. Four brick pilasters, running from the second through fourth stories, demarcate the center bay and the building's corners.

The east elevation and exposed areas of the north and south walls are of red brick, laid in a standard running bond with an alternate header every sixth course.

4. Structural system, framing: The structure is supported on four load-bearing masonry walls running east-west. They divide the building into three 14'-0" wide bays, and extend from the basement to the roof. On the first floor, sections of the two interior load-bearing walls are replaced by cast-iron columns which support I-beams and allow for more open space. In turn, these I-beams support the 12" thick masonry above. 2"x12" wooden joists run north-south at all levels, and are pocketed into the walls.
5. No porches, stoops, balconies, or bulkheads.

GRIGGS BUILDING  
(Franklin House, Rex Hotel)  
HABS No. CT-410 (Page 7)

6. Chimneys: There are four rectangular brick chimneys at each corner of the building. Two, above the west facade, are formed by a continuation of the side walls. They have brick panel details on all sides and brownstone hoods. The other two, stepped back from the east wall, are smaller and simpler. One, in the north-east corner, features a corbeled top, while the other has lost all details and is in poor condition.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: There are four storefront entrance doors. All are pushed three to four feet back from the sidewalk. The far left door is non-original aluminum. The other three are wood and glass paneled doors with transom lights above. Hardware includes thumb-latch brass handles and a painted "Star Sprinkler Corp." bell alarm above the hotel's entrance.

All doors on the east elevation have been removed and openings covered with plywood. The remaining thick lintels and thresholds are made of smooth-cut, light-colored granite. The sizes of the three openings on the first story suggest that there were once double-doors with transom lights. On the second story there are two smaller door openings, and one opening for each subsequent story.

b. Windows: There is a display window in each of the three first story bays. Both the middle and right bay windows are surrounded by molded wood frames which are tied to the cast-iron piers. Each window is divided into a large display area with a transom light above. The middle bay's arched transom has a fan carving in the spandrel panel, and this detail is repeated over the doors in the same bay. The left bay's display window rests on a light-colored brick base and is framed in aluminum.

The facade's upper story windows are separated into two bays. Each bay contains three windows which are framed by brick pilasters. The pilasters bear a brownstone entablature on the second story and lintels with an ogee-curved shape to their lower edge on the third story.



## GRIGGS BUILDING

(Franklin House, Rex Hotel)

HABS No. CT-410 (Page 8)

On the fourth story, round arches with prominent keystones spring from the pilasters and frame each window. There are two square window openings in both dormers on the fifth story. Brick pilasters support the gable and frame each opening. All sills are of brownstone. On the third and fourth stories, they continue across the entire facade and form breaks over the building's four main pilasters. All sashes, except for the dormers', are one-over-one double-hung. The second and third stories have multi-colored, stained-glass border panes in the upper sash, while the fourth story's are round headed.

The east elevation window openings all have thick, smooth-cut, light-colored granite lintels and sills. Opening sizes vary depending upon the room's function. On the fifth story, all window openings are shorter due to the 6'-6" floor-to-ceiling height. Most wooden frames and sashes have been removed, and the openings covered with plywood.

On the north elevation there are window openings on the fifth story, and on the south in the light well. These are even simpler in design with 4" rise segmental arches and rough-cut granite sills.

### 8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The building's fifth story is treated as a steep hip roof. The gradual eastern slope is covered with non-original built-up roofing, and painted sheet-metal coping finishes the north, south, and east walls. The steep western slope is covered with grey fish-scale slates, and is broken up by two dormers.
- b. Cornice, eaves: The hip roof's western slope rests on the building's main cornice. The brownstone cornice moldings form breaks over the fourth story window arches and the facade's four main pilasters.
- c. Dormers: There are two gabled dormers on the roof's western slope. They are centered over the facade's two bays and flanked by over-scaled brownstone foot scrolls. A denticulated wooden cornice is returned across each gable and forms

GRIGGS BUILDING  
(Franklin House, Rex Hotel)  
HABS No. CT-410 (Page 9)

breaks over the window jambs. The area within the resulting triangle is filled with elaborate vine-like wood carvings. The gables are roofed with grey fish-scale slate.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floorplans: Sketch plans are included, see pages 15 through 22.
2. Stairways: There are enclosed stairways running from each first floor bay to the basement. All three are placed near the east end of the building along the bearing walls. Access to the second floor is from a stairway located in the north-west corner of the middle bay. This stairway opens onto the hotel's circulation core: a great central space with tiered balconies which flank the open stairwell running from the second through the fifth floors. These stairs and balconies have turned balusters and newels, and curved molded handrails of hardwood. A short staircase in the center of the building's west end leads to a small attic and roof hatch. All stairways are presumed to be original.
3. Flooring: The 3" wide wood flooring has in most areas been covered with linoleum or damaged by water and neglect.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls and ceilings are plastered lath. Simple narrow-board wainscotting extends 3'-4" above the finished floor in many areas on the upper floors. Most interior paint is in advanced stages of crazing, and much plaster has been ruined due to water damage.
5. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: Each hotel room is accessed from the central stairhall, and doorways to these rooms are standard throughout the building. The frame has simple molded trim and bull's eye corner blocks. The painted wood doors have four simple panel divisions and standard hardware. A fixed louver is framed in the transom above. Two larger hotel rooms are partitioned by non-original glazed french doors. There are no other notable doorways.
  - b. Windows: The most unusual windows in the building

are those located between the smaller hotel rooms and the central stairhall. Aside from the visual interest they give to the stairhall, they may have been designed to comply with the building code. The code may have stated that every hotel room must have at least two windows. In all other respects the windows are the same as their outward-looking neighbors: two-over-two double-hung sashes with simple molded trim and bull's eye corner blocks.

Other sources of natural lighting include two large skylights, each measuring 7'-0" x 12'-0", located above the central stairhall. One is in poor condition, and the other has been removed and the opening covered with plywood.

6. Decorative features and trim: The building's interior is simple and modest in comparison to its street facade. The few decorative elements include small fireplaces in the larger front rooms on the upper floors. The mantels are of simply carved and painted slate. Their designs intermix Classical, Italianate, and Eastlake motifs.

On the second floor in the large north-east corner room there is a decorative room divider. Two low paneled partitions, built into the wall, support molded wood piers which in turn support a simple arched wooden valance.

7. Hardware: In some hotel rooms service buzzers have been added. They are inoperable. Other hardware is limited to standard door knobs and hinges.
8. Mechanical equipment:

- a. HVAC: Physical evidence suggests that coal burning ovens and fireplaces were the original heating sources. Capped flue openings are located on all floors in the south and north-east corners. Radiators were added later. Many were simply attached to wall partitions in long courses, rather than the typical free-standing floor units. There is a large furnace in the center rear portion of the basement. To its north are oil tanks, and to the west hot-water tanks.

- b. Lighting: On the upper floors in the central

GRIGGS BUILDING  
(Franklin House, Rex Hotel)  
HABS No. CT-410 (Page 11)

stairhall there remain what appear to be hook-ups for some sort of gas-fueled wall sconce. However, the fixtures themselves no longer exist, and the fuel source has not been located. In their place, and throughout the building, are simple painted metal ceiling fixtures with pull-cords.

- c. Plumbing: In the hotel area there are two washrooms and a corridor sink for each floor. In the middle bay of the first floor three stall showers were, most likely, later additions.

There is one drain on the roof's south-east corner. A storm pipe drops directly down to the basement, slopes west to the street, and into the city's storm-main.

The building, at some point, was equipped with a sprinkler system. The sprinkler main is located below the sidewalk in the basement. From there, a maze of exposed pipes travels through the entire building.

9. Alterations to be constructed in 1987-1989: The Griggs Building will serve as the main entrance and lobby for offices located on the upper floors of all four buildings. This lobby/entrance will occupy the left bay of the first floor, and an elevator will service the upper floors. The remaining two bays of the first floor will accommodate a retail shop accessible from the existing Bank Street storefront entrance, a fire stairwell, and a kitchen in the rear which will service the bar at 229-231 Bank Street. The second and third floors will each have two office spaces, and a new central corridor running north-south which will connect all four buildings. The original open stairwell will remain as a focal point between the fourth and fifth floors. These floors will accommodate one large office suite. All bearing walls, their original trim, and their window and door openings will be preserved.

Exterior work will follow appropriate and recommended restoration methods. New construction will be limited to the non-original left storefront bay. On the east elevation, boarded windows will be replaced with double-hung sashes or set-back matching brick infills. The west facade's 'billboard' will be removed.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The Griggs Building is the second southernmost structure of the four remaining turn-of-the-century commercial buildings, now forming the Bank Street Historic District. The district is located on the east side of Bank Street between Grand Street and Interstate 84. The National Register's Inventory-Nomination form for this district describes the site: "The boundaries of the district reflect the physical isolation of these buildings from the rest of Waterbury's downtown. Formerly, the district was a continuation of the commercial area which extends west on Grand Street and north on Bank, but today strong visual interruptions make these four buildings a cohesive unit which stands better on its own".
2. Historic landscape design: The Griggs Building stands flush with Bank Street's sidewalk and is contiguous with buildings to the north and south.
3. Outbuildings: None.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Architectural Drawings: None.
- B. Historic views: None to be found or known.
- C. Interviews: None.
- D. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Clerk's Office of the City of Waterbury, Waterbury, CT. Waterbury Land Records.

Waterbury Action to Conserve Our Heritage, Inc. Scrapbook. Historic preservation activities in Waterbury: 1974-1986. Compiled by WATCH treasurer Elsie Ruffleth. Waterbury, Connecticut.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Anderson, Joseph, ed. The Town and City of Waterbury, Connecticut. From the Aboriginal Period to the Year 1895. Volume II. New Haven: The Price and Lee Company, 1896.

GRIGGS BUILDING  
(Franklin House, Rex Hotel)  
HABS No. CT-410 (Page 13)

Connecticut Historical Commission, Hartford, CT.  
Historic Resources Inventory Form. "Waterbury  
Architectural Survey." 1978.

Mattatuck Museum, Waterbury, CT. Waterbury Action to  
Conserve Our Heritage (WATCH). "Central District  
Rehabilitation Study." 1980.

Pape, William J. History of Waterbury and the  
Naugatuck Valley, Connecticut. Chicago, New York:  
S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1918, 3 volumes.

United States Department of the Interior, National  
Park Service. National Register of Historic Places.  
Inventory-Nomination Form: "Bank Street Historic  
District, Waterbury, CT."

Waterbury Daily Republican. Volume 1, number 2.  
January 3, 1884. Pages 1 - 4.

Waterbury Renewal and Economic Development Agency,  
Waterbury, CT. "Central Business District Project  
Historic Survey." 1978.

E. Likely sources not yet investigated: None known.

F. Supplemental material:

1. Graphic documentation, see pages 15 through 22.
2. Copy of Waterbury Republican advertisement:  
Referenced from I.B. of this outline.

## BUILDING LOTS !

I invite the attention of all seek-  
ing lots in the

**North Part of the City,**

To my lots on North Main street,  
and in the vicinity.

My prices are low and terms easy

H. C. GRIGGS.

At Factory near North Main St.,

Or House No 10. Cottage Place.

GRIGGS BUILDING  
(Franklin House, Rex Hotel)  
HABS No. CT-410 (Page 14)

3. Copy of Waterbury Republican advertisement:  
Referenced from I.B. of this outline.

**BENTON**

Is now ready to make

appointments for

sittings at his

**Gallery on Bank Street,**

24 m3 Near the Rink.

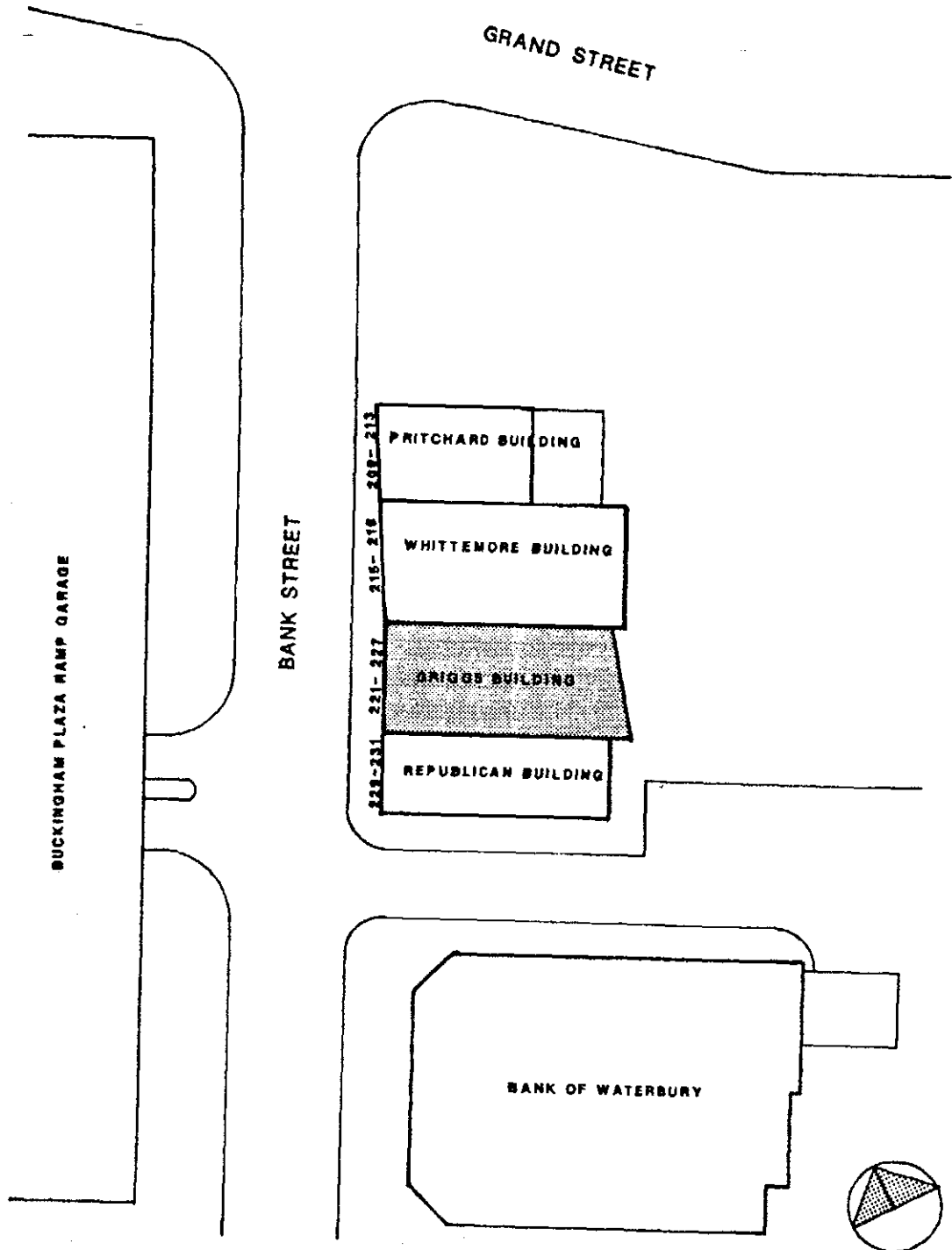
#### PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Buckingham Square Associates, in cooperation with Waterbury Renewal and Economic Development Agency and the United States Department of the Interior's National Park Service, has undertaken to rehabilitate and restore the Bank Street Historic District. The district lies on the edge of Waterbury's busiest commercial neighborhood. The object of the project is to rehabilitate the four buildings so they will once again be a part of that neighborhood, and at the same time to preserve a part of Waterbury's architectural history.

Section 106 mitigation required documentation of existing resources.

Prepared by: Christina Wasch  
Title: Architectural Assistant  
Affiliation: Michael S. Stein, A.I.A.  
Date: October 1987

GRIGGS BUILDING  
(Franklin House, Rex Hotel)  
HABS No. CT-410 (Page 15)

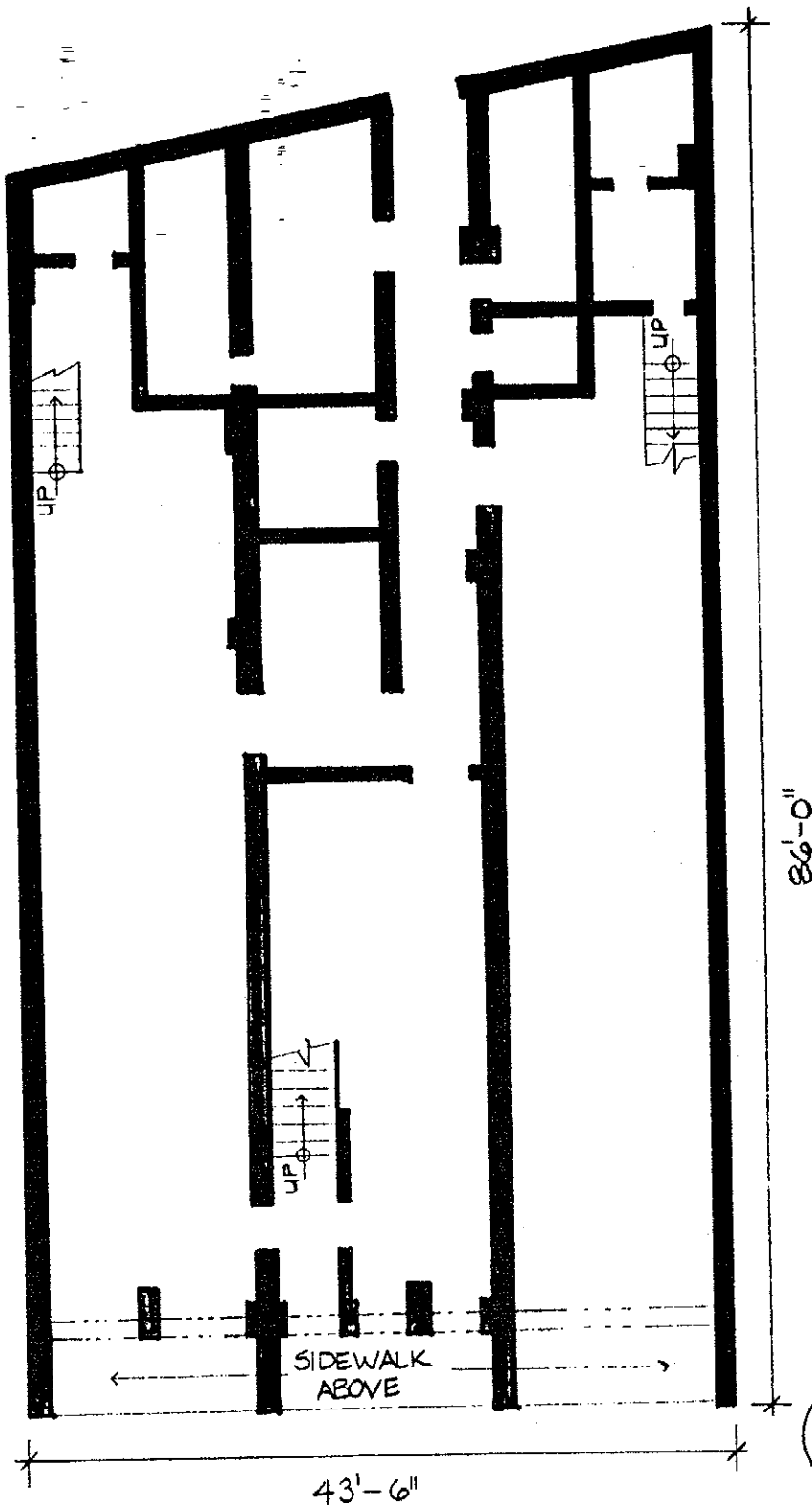


SITE PLAN

DATE: OCT. 1987



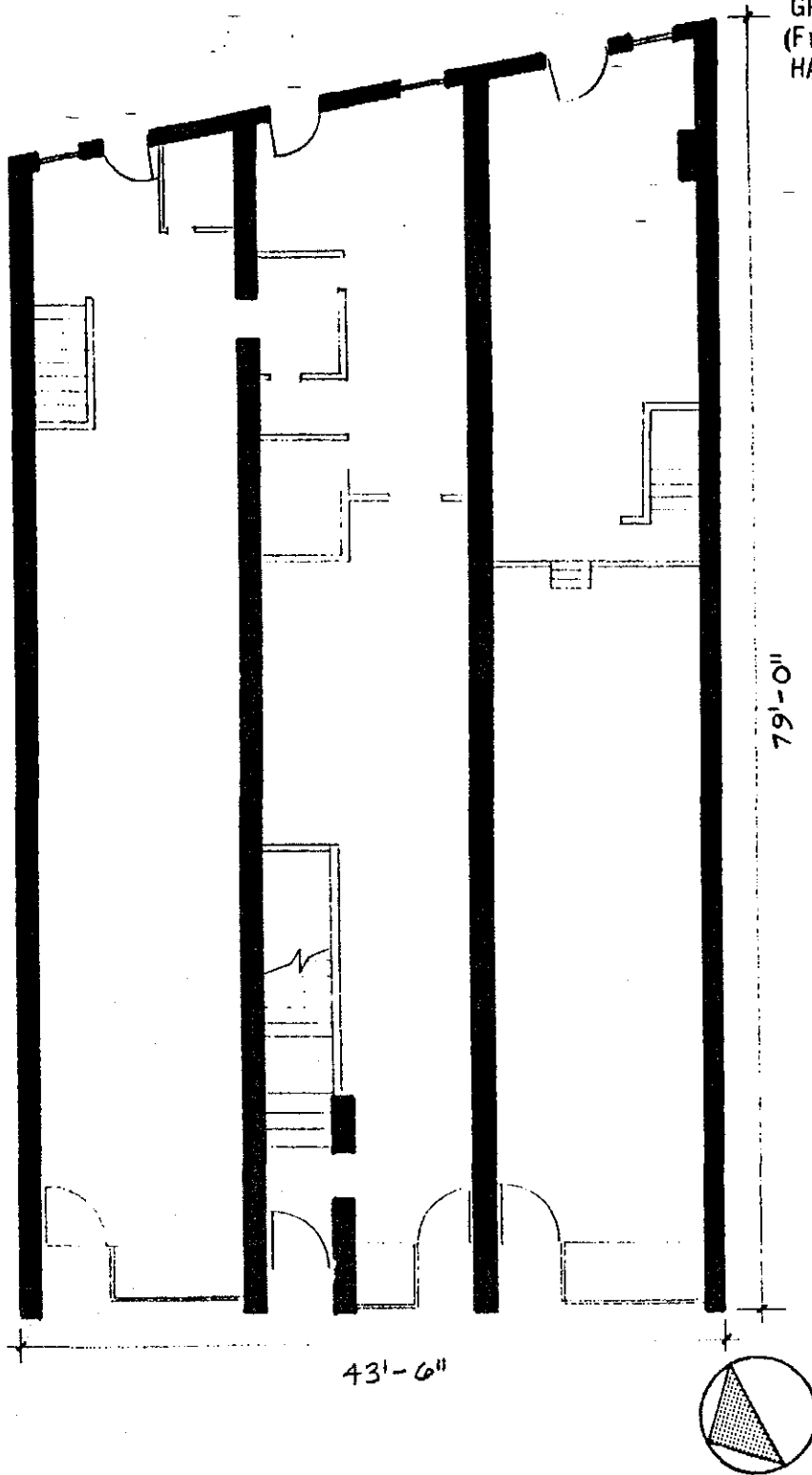
GRIGGS BUILDING  
(Franklin House, Rex Hotel)  
HABS No. CT-410 (Page 16)



BASEMENT PLAN

DATE: OCT. 1987

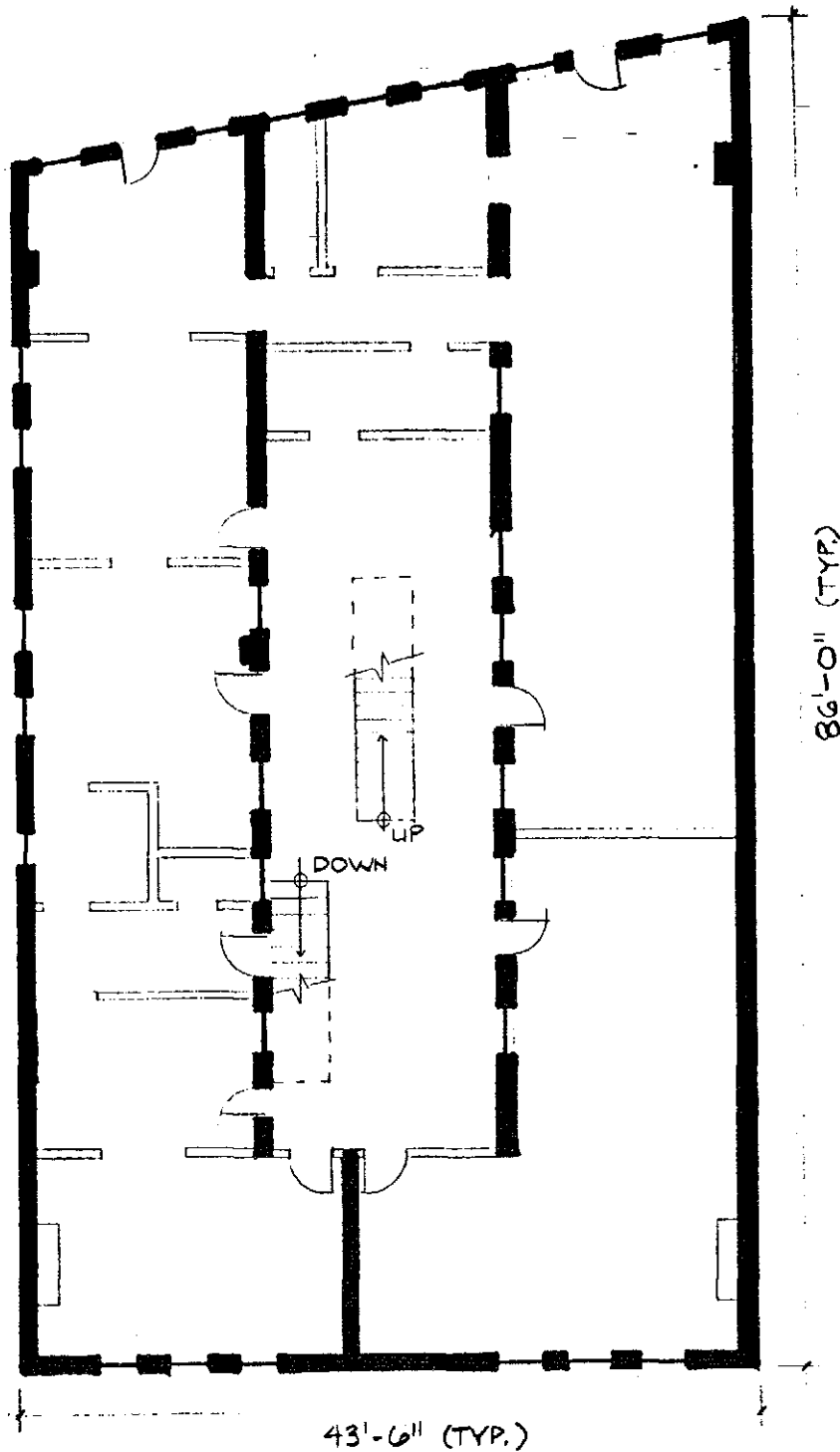
GRIGGS BUILDING  
(Franklin House, Rex Hotel)  
HABS No. CT-410 (Page 17)



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

DATE: OCT. 1987

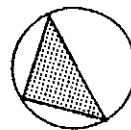
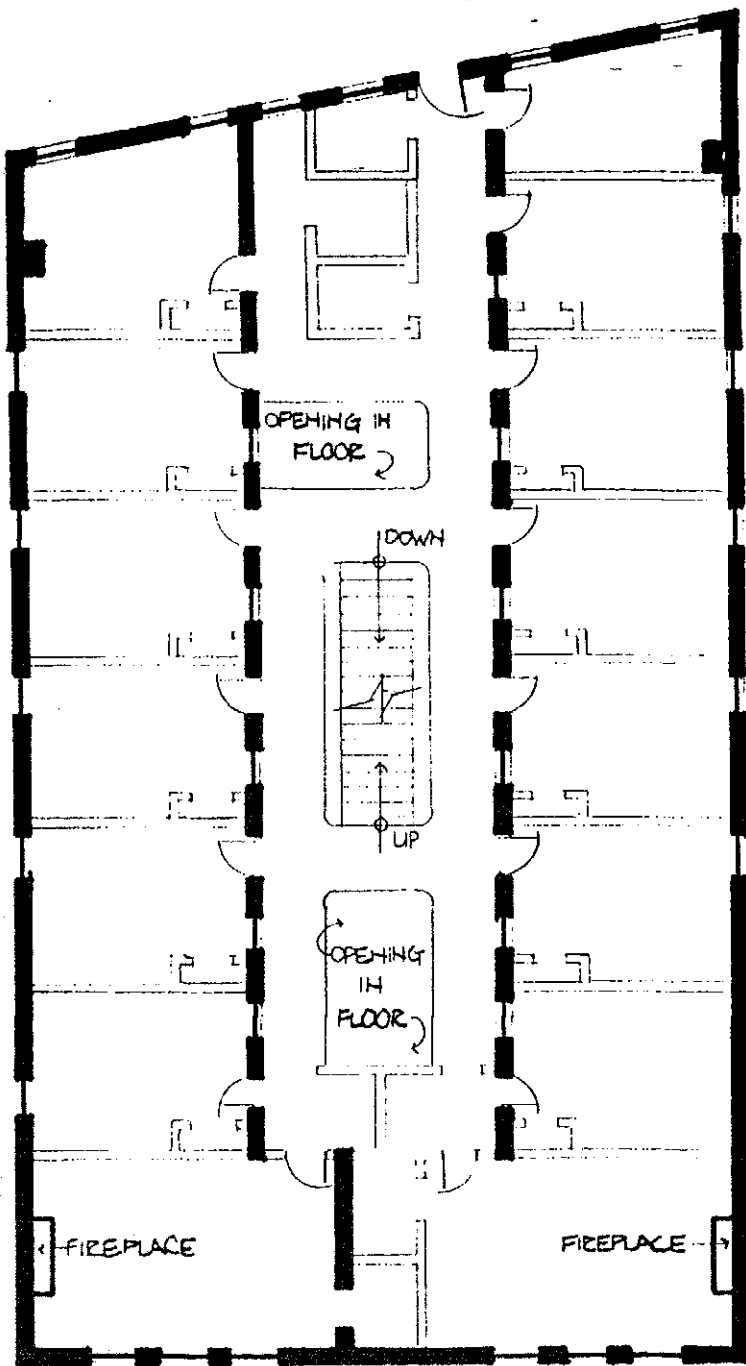
GRIGGS BUILDING  
(Franklin House, Rex Hotel)  
HABS No. CT-410 (Page 18)



SECOND FLOOR PLAN

DATE: OCT. 1987

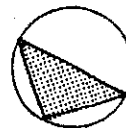
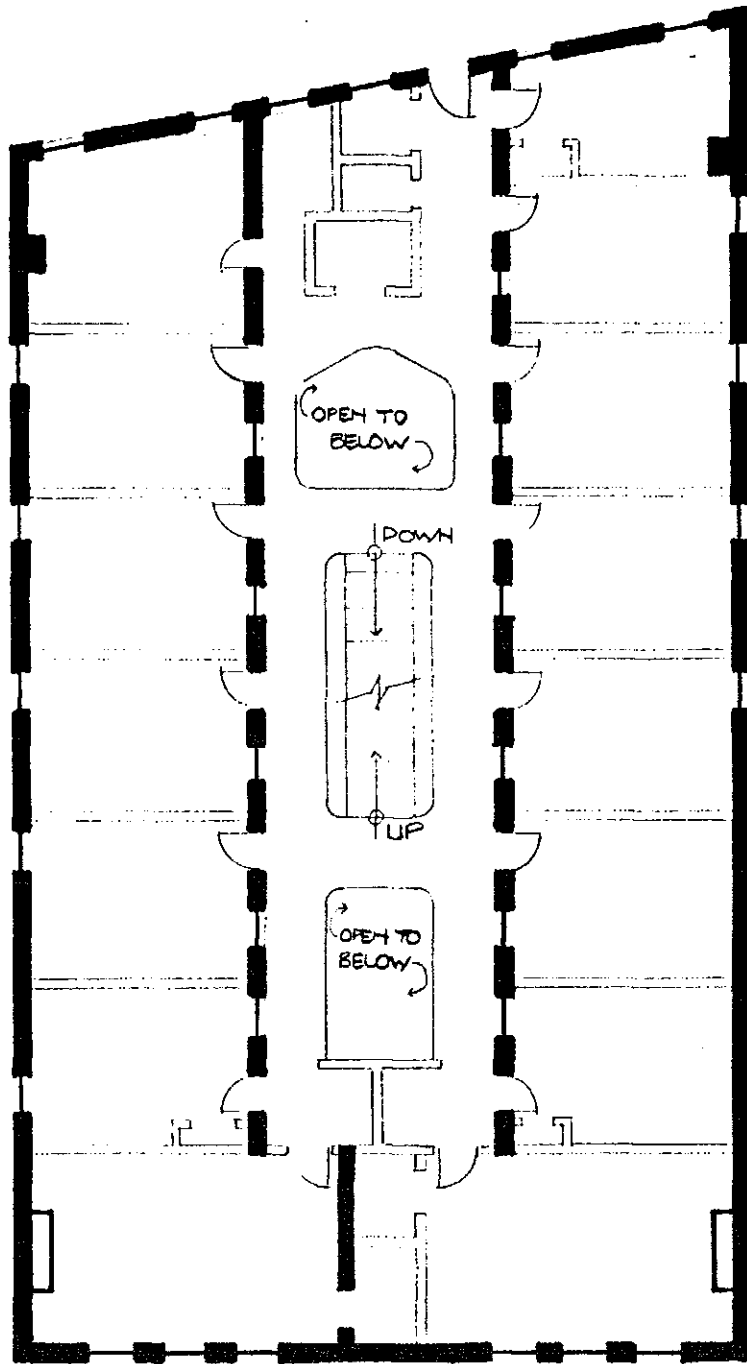
GRIGGS BUILDING  
(Franklin house, Rex Hotel)  
-HABS No. CT-410 (Page 19)



THIRD FLOOR PLAN

DATE: OCT. 1987

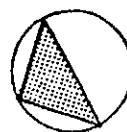
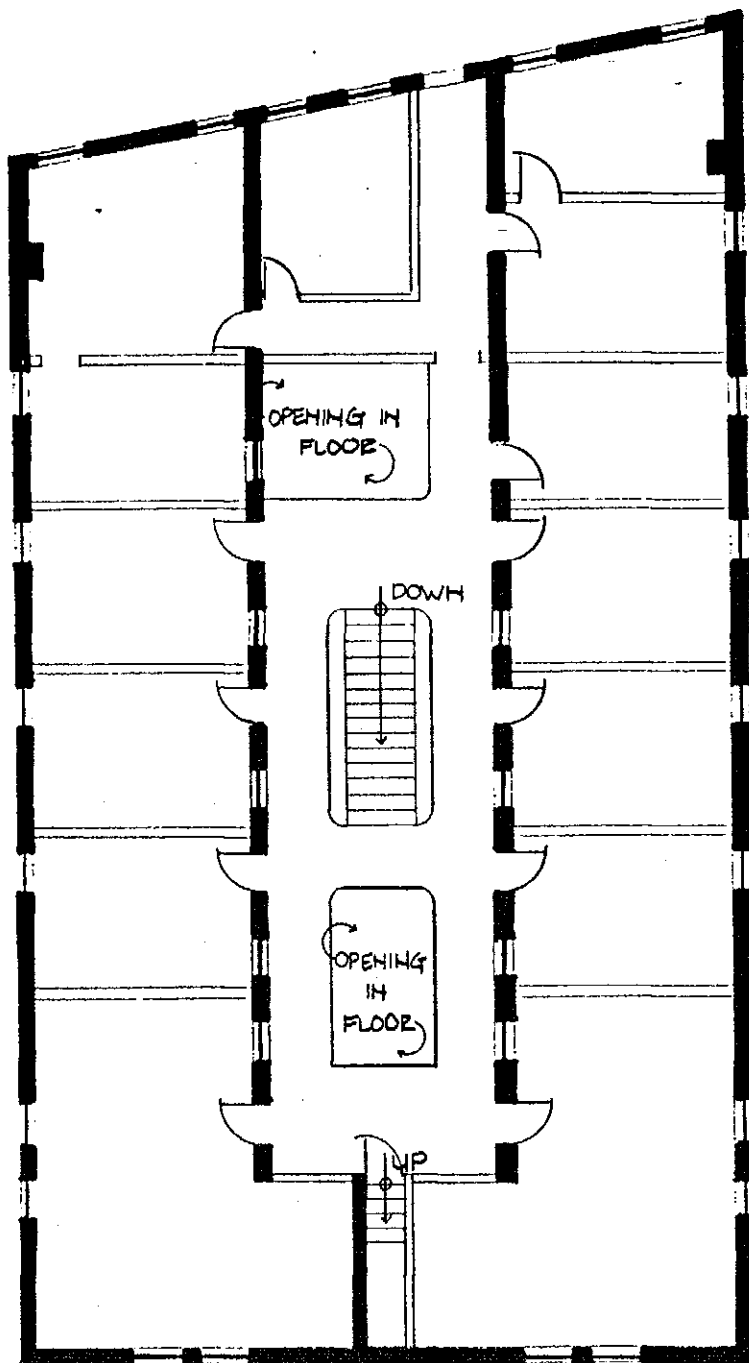
GRIGGS BUILDING  
(Franklin House, Rex Hotel)  
HABS No. CT-410 (Page 20)



FOURTH FLOOR PLAN

DATE: OCT. 1987

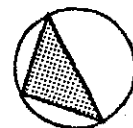
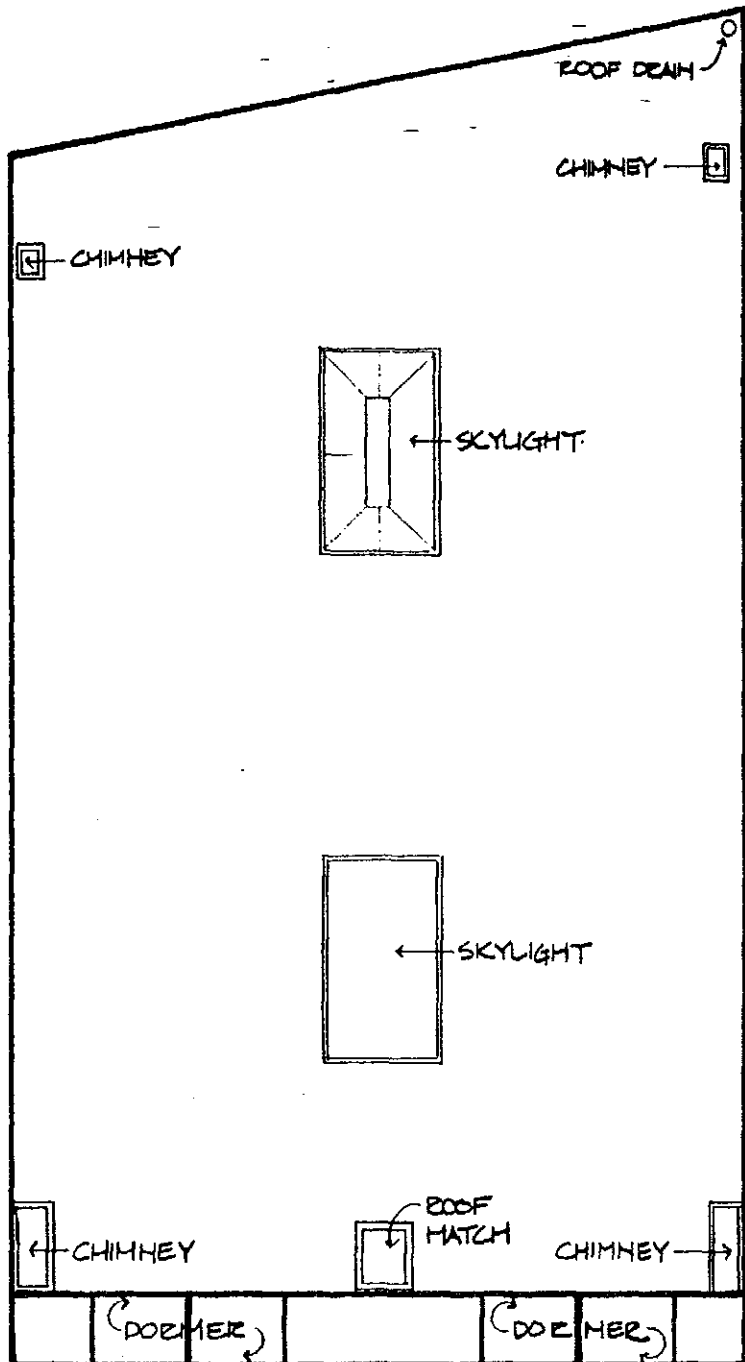
GRIGGS BUILDING  
(Franklin House, Rex Hotel)  
HABS No. 410 (Page 21)



FIFTH FLOOR PLAN

DATE: OCT. 1987

GRIGGS BUILDING  
(Franklin House, Rex Hotel)  
HABS No. 410 (Page 22)



**ROOF PLAN**

**DATE: OCT. 1987**